



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

**Tuesday, September 30, 2008**

**6:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **SPECIAL MEETING**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.*

#### **2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond and Councilor Streeter

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.*

#### **3. Calendar and Communications**

*Councilor Kolnaski asked that Colonel Ledyard School be placed on the next Committee of the Whole agenda and that Mayor Popp of the City be invited to attend. Mayor Watson noted that there will be a joint meeting with the City Council on October 27th.*

*Councilor Brown-Tracy attended the Hygienic Art Association opening for an art exhibit on breast cancer awareness where the Town of Groton was presented with a plaque of appreciation.*

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

##### **2008-0230 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)**

##### **RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of September 9, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to adopt.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **2008-0233 Resolution Approving Amount of Bonds to be Issued in FYE 2009**

##### **Discussed**

*Director of Finance Sal Pandolfo described the request for approval of general obligation bonds and general obligation sewer bonds to be issued in November 2008. Bonds and notes are for schools, the Senior Center, the Animal Shelter, and the Fort Hill Sewer project.*

*Councilor Bond arrived at 6:10 p.m.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Streeter

##### **Discussed**

*Mr. Pandolfo reviewed the Town's current debt limit compared to statutory limits and Town Council policy and noted the next projected bond issue in October 2009.*

*Mr. Pandolfo noted modifications to the draft resolutions that were distributed to the Council.*

*Councilor Sheets questioned the ability to sell the bond in the current market. Mr. Pandolfo noted the sale is proposed for October 21st and it will depend on what is happening in the market at that time.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0234**

**Contract Agreement Between the Groton Board of Education and the Groton Public Schools Paraprofessional Association**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that there is no need for the Town Council to act on the contract between the Board of Education and the paraprofessionals. The qualifier is that the Town Council signs off on contracts with "certified" individuals. There is also no provision in the Charter requiring the Town Council to sign off on this contract.*

*Councilor O'Beirne suggested that this seems to be a loophole by which the Board of Education can obligate the Town for a sum of money that the Town Council has no control over. The Town Manager noted that this is a state statute provision. A provision could be added to the Charter requiring all Board of Education contracts to be ratified, however at this time the Town Manager is confident that the Council has no authority to act on this contract.*

*Councilor Sheets noted additional provisions in the statute that seem to suggest that with an RTM initiative, 200 people could petition to have a vote on school contracts. She asked the Council if they feel a legal opinion on the issue would be worthwhile. The Town Manager stated that staff will look at the provision and provide a report prior to involving the Town Attorney.*

**2008-0236**

**Potential Change to the Non-Union Retirement Program**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted this issue has been resolved. The referral was deleted by consensus.*

**2008-0224**

**Relocation of Roller Hockey Rink**

**Discussed**

*Gary Schneider, John Silsby, Jerry Lokken and Phil Butta were present to address the Council. The Town Manager noted that the plans for the Senior Center will require the relocation of the roller hockey rink and staff is looking for input from the Council on potential sites. The Town Manager would prefer a permanent location and feels that this use would be good at a larger recreational facility as opposed to being a stand-alone use.*

*Mr. Schneider explained that staff looked at all Town-owned land. The rink requires a 100' x 85' asphalt pad. Three sites are recommended for further consideration: 1) the existing site, but closer to the Library; 2) the Copp property; and 3) the Esker Point Beach parking lot. There are plusses and minuses to all sites. All are stand alone sites that do not offer any night lighting.*

*Councilor O'Beirne asked about estimated costs by site. He also suggested that the Council hold a public hearing to solicit comments from users of the rink.*

*As a user of the program, Mr. Butta offered the following observations. He noted that the hockey program started in 1985 at Esker Point Beach. The rink was subsequently obtained from Connecticut College. Mr. Butta noted that the rink is used by all age groups and it is a family program. It is a unique facility in this area and an asset to the Town. The bottom line from the*

users is they want to be able to play and they do not want the rink to go away. They are also willing to make sacrifices such as the special surface coating to keep the rink operational. Users are comfortable with the library site. Mr. Butta suggested that the soccer field that will be lost at the Library is not a good field and is a safety hazard. The Copp property would be a great site, but it may not be financially realistic at this time.

Mr. Silsby noted that the roller hockey programs start in mid-spring and run into late fall and the desire was to take the rink out of service over the winter and have it back up for the start of the program. The closer the relocation site the easier it is to move.

Councilor Sheets noted her concerns with the Copp property and Esker Point Beach because of the loss of parking. She expressed her preference for the Library site. Councilor O'Beirne asked if Mr. Butta has any concerns with the need for transportation to the Copp property or Esker Point Beach. Mr. Butta stated that most users drive or have transportation so the location is not an issue.

Councilor Brown-Tracy left the meeting.

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Brown-Tracy and Councilor Streeter

**Discussed**

Councilor Bond supports keeping the rink at the Library site for now, but would like to see it eventually moved to the Copp property. If the soccer field at the Library will be lost, she would like to confirm that there will be another soccer field provided at the Merritt property. The Town Manager noted that removing the temporary parking lot on the Merritt property and leveling that area is part of the plan, but what the ultimate condition will be compared to what is at the Library is unknown. Councilor Bond requested a referral to the Committee of the Whole on the Merritt property field and the Mayor made the referral.

Councilor Monteiro asked how much the baseball field at Farquhar Park is used. Mr. Lokken noted that there are many contracts for the field. It is not a premium field, but it is being used.

The consensus of the Committee of the Whole was to support relocating the roller hockey rink closer to the Library.

**A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0235**

**Mortimer Wright Preserve Trail Proposal**

**Discussed**

The Town Manager and John Silsby were approached by Bernie French seeking permission to construct trails through the Mortimer Wright Preserve property. The property is undeveloped with some trails. Dr. French, who is a mountain biker, wants to improve the trails by cutting back some brush. He has also worked with the State to improve trails at Haley Farm and the O&G property. The Town Manager suggested that Dr. French meet with the Conservation Commission, and they expressed support for Dr. French's proposal. A number of suggestions made by the Commission are good and they may happen over time, but they are not part of Dr. French's proposal. The Conservation Commission is also suggesting acquiring a parcel of property surrounded by the Mortimer Wright Preserve (the Weber property).

Mr. Silsby noted that a trail system on the Mortimer Wright Preserve is included in the Trails Master Plan and Dr. French's proposal will create the potential for more trail connections.

*Councilor Brown-Tracy returned to the meeting.*

**Roll Call:** Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Sheets  
Members Absent: Councilor Streeter

**Discussed**

*Councilor Monteiro asked if the Weber property is landlocked. The Town Manager explained that there is a path that the property owner has a right to use to gain access, but not to install utilities. The Town Manager believes that the property was purchased for hunting purposes. The trails proposed by Dr. French are some distance away from the Weber property.*

*The Council asked that Dr. French be invited to a future Committee of the Whole meeting to discuss his proposal. The Town Manager also offered to conduct a site walk for interested Councilors. Councilor Monteiro asked for an overlay showing the existing and proposed trails.*

*The Mayor made a referral to the Committee of the Whole on the potential acquisition of the Weber property, to be discussed under 2008-006 Property Acquisition/Sale (2008 Standing Referral).*

**2008-0201 Groton Community Boating Club Board of Advisors - Town Council Liaison**

**Discussed**

*The Council was previously approached by Ed Eckelmeyer and asked to consider appointing a liaison to the Groton Community Boating Club Board of Advisors. No Town funds are donated to this program. Mr. Eckelmeyer asked for seed money to be included in this year's budget, but that was not considered by the Council. Phil Butta noted that he has been involved with the club and has facilitated a meeting of those interested in using the facility and taking advantage of the waterfront access at the Spicer House. Mr. Butta has encouraged the club to go out and find some funding on their own in keeping with Parks and Recreation's philosophy that programs geared toward adults should pay for their own operational costs. The club has been asked to put together a business plan and to identify equipment needs. Mr. Eckelmeyer's request for a liaison is as a private individual; the idea was not discussed by the Board. Mr. Butta suggested that a liaison would help the Council to understand the group.*

*Mayor Watson suggested that the group needs to get more organized and perhaps adopt some bylaws. Mr. Lokken noted that the group is knowledgeable about boating, but getting them to broaden their vision and look at larger issues has been difficult.*

*Councilor Schmidt stated she would be interested in acting as the liaison to the group.*

**Recommended for a Resolution**

**2008-0223 U.S. Department of Justice Grant**

**A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0227 Connecticut Municipalities 2008 Special Funding Initiative Grant Revised**

**A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0229 Hunting on Town Owned Property**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that these requests have been received periodically and have been denied in the past. A brief discussion ensued and the consensus of the Committee of the Whole was to deny the request.*

**Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2008-0237**

**Appointments to Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community**

**Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Councilor Sheets has received a number of phone calls from individuals volunteering for the Task Force, which she has referred to the Town Clerk, however she realized that it is probably not appropriate for the volunteers to go through the Town Committee process since they may not be Town residents. Councilor Sheets asked for the Council's consensus that Task Force volunteers' applications will come right to the Personnel Committee. Councilor Monteiro would like to impose a requirement that members live or work in Groton. Councilor Sheets noted that the issue of residency was discussed in Committee and the resolution approved by the Council indicates that any one can serve on the committee. Councilor O'Beirne noted that this would not be setting a precedent since there are existing boards that have non-resident members. In this case, the Town is looking for members with a certain expertise rather than a particular residence.*

*The consensus of the Committee of the Whole as to have applications for the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community bypass the Committee system and come before the Town Council Personnel and Appointments Committee.*

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*